



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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President Shelly meets with officials on General Leasing Act



Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly traveled to Washington, D.C. and met with federal officials on the Navajo Nation General Leasing Regulation Act of 2013 and other concerns from the Nation. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. Department of Interior is moving forward with the Navajo Nation General Leasing Regulation Act of 2013, after meeting with Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly last week.

President Shelly traveled to Washington, D.C. and met with federal officials on a host of issues, including leasing provisions, telecommunications, housing and Navajo Head Start. He is awaiting the official approval letter from the DOI for the Act.

In 2013, the General Leasing Regulation Act was enacted to streamline residential and business site leasing on the Navajo Nation by providing the Nation authority to approve such leases without involvement from the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

However, mineral and right-of-way leases were excluded from the legislation and still require DOI approval, he said.

“The approval of the General Leasing Act by the Department of Interior is another step toward

self-sufficiency,” President Shelly said. “This provides the Navajo Nation the authority to approve leases for homes and businesses.

“New business means growth and economic development for the Nation,” he added.

The Helping Expedite and Advance Responsible Tribal Homeownership Act, or the HEARTH Act, was enacted on July 30, 2012, after President Barack Obama signed H.R. 205 into law.

The bill followed the Navajo Nation Leasing Act of 2000 as a template.

Mike Halona, manager of Navajo Land Department said approving the Navajo Nation General Leasing Regulation Act of 2013 would be another historic step for Indian Country.

“There will be no need for the BIA to approve residential home site leasing, schools, religious sites, agriculture, energy, grazing. The Navajo Nation can now do all of those needs to streamline the approval process,” he said.

“Once again, the Navajo Nation is leading the way for the rest of Indian Country by using technology and self-determination,” President Shelly said. “The Navajo Nation improved the HEARTH Act for all tribes.”

The decision to use the Navajo Nation Leasing Act as a template occurred in 2010, when Halona and others met with the BIA and DOI to request for seed money for the Navajo Land Title Data System.

The Navajo Land Department is currently uploading data to the NLTDS.

“Which is peanuts when you consider what we’ve been able to develop. We developed a system that you cannot get anywhere else and helped all tribes,” Halona said.

The Navajo Land Department will have an enterprise license in place by summer and will begin providing other tribal departments and entities with access to their automated land title plant.

Twelve tribes are already on the waiting list for the chance to follow the NLTDS as a template for their own automated database.

“Imagine the independence

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All current conveyances are being uploaded to the database and Halona said the department is simultaneously entering past data records. He anticipates completion in one to two years.

“Then we’ll have the government certify our system as a title plant,” he said.

Streamlining the land conveyance process will provide users with access to personal, industrial and economic leases, including community land use plans. Since 2006, the Land Department has invested \$1.2 million into the database.

that we’ll have. We’ll know every square inch of our land,” Halona said.

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